Formal Consultation Responses – 211 to 225, not all in number order.

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**Response 224**

 Re:  The proposed opening of a fixed net fishery in the Salcombe Kingsbridge Estuary

Dear Sirs or Mesdames,

I have a doctorate in Microbiology and spent part of my BSc course at The Marine Biology Laboratory of the University of Plymouth.  I am a member of the Kingsbridge Natural History Society and passionate about the ecology of the area and wildlife in general.

I also realise that we are in a climate and nature emergency and action needs to be taken URGENTLY - which means NOW.

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The D&S IFCA should know about the nature emergency and so I am puzzled by this application to change a bylaw which would cause a clear risk of damaging the valuable sea bass and mullet populations of Devon. With its official designation as a sea bass nursery area, the Salcombe/Kingsbridge Estuary must not be opened to an increase in fixed net fishing. There are also risks to biologically valuable sea grass beds and to bycatch of wildfowl and other creatures living in this fragile environment. I have personally filmed otter in the estuary, and even this mammal would be at risk of entanglement in fixed nets. I strongly oppose the proposal to open a fixed net fishery.

The D&S IFCA should surely be obliged to reduce their use of nets - not increase it.  Has it considered the win-win solution of off-shore Mussel farming?

I quote from the following publication from the University of Plymouth:

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Simon-Pittman/publication/334895410_Bivalves_boost_biodiversity/links/5d6450f8458515d610265bb0/Bivalves-boost-biodiversity.pdf>

*‘The development potential for sustainable food production in the ocean is vast, with aquaculture capable of meeting global seafood demand using less than 0.015% of the total ocean area.*

*In addition to food supply, there is also growing awareness of the potential wider ecosystem benefits of bivalve aquaculture, including regulating services such as nutrient remediation, carbon sequestration and coastal defence’*

Further, an article in the Guardian: ‘A happy food chain: can mussel farming restore the UK’s damaged coastline?’ also gives an excellent review of the benefits of off- shore mussel farming:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/mar/05/can-mussel-farming-restore-the-uks-damaged-coastline-aoe>

Thus, Mussel cultivation has great benefits for the environment and for the health of those who add them to their dinner menus. It would also provide significant income to compensate the down turn in pot fishing.

Yours faithfully,

 Vivienne Mugford

PS.  As an avid beach cleaner, having organised beach cleans for the Marine Conservation Society, I am pleased to find a reduction of plastics on local sea and estuary beaches, since David Attenborough’s landmark final episode of Blue Planet II in 2018.

What does remain, as 90% of the plastic collected, is commercial fishing gear, especially the off-cuts of (mostly green) netting.  This seems to suggest that the fishing industry does not care. I hope it can prove me wrong and start working for nature.